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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the experience of Clarion State College Libraries in supporting an off-campus program offered for graduate library science students in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and discusses the rationale for off-campus continuing education library service. Descriptions are given of the development of the off-campus library science program and the methods used to provide library materials in support of the program from the Dauphin County Public Library, the Pennsylvania State Library, and Clarion State College's own campus library. There is also a brief discussion of the accreditation of off-campus programs. Reasons for the full library support of off-campus programs are provided as well as a list of recommendations for library support requirements, and an expression of advocacy for state or regional standards covering off-campus library support. (ESR)

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Library Services for the Distant Learner, The Clarion State College Libraries' Experience

Gerard B. McCabe

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Abstract

The author presents the experience of Clarion State College Libraries in supporting an off-campus program offered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania by the School of Library Science and the Graduate School of Clarion State College. Also described are efforts in support of School of Business Administration course offerings in the Clarion and Oil City areas of Pennsylvania.

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National University Continuing Education Association Conference
Reno, Nevada
Panel Discussion

Library Services for the Distant Learner
The Clarion State College Libraries' Experience

In the libraries of Clarion State College the premise of service for library support to off-campus continuing education students is that service ought to be as close to campus based library service as possible. There should be some noticeable equivalency between the service offered on either of Clarion's two campuses and the services received by those who are at some distance from either of the campuses.

Through its School of Business Administration, Clarion State College offers business courses for graduate credit within a reasonable driving radius of each of its campuses which are located in Oil City and Clarion, Pennsylvania. Both campus libraries which are 30 miles apart are used in support of this service, so the geographic area is large. Clarion's most remote program however, is a new one and is offered 200 miles away in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the state capital. This is a Library Science graduate program offered in response to requests for regular graduate level courses by a substantial library oriented population in the Harrisburg area.

The Harrisburg location at which this program is being offered is one of the branches of the Dauphin County Public Library. It is the East Shore Area Branch Library, located on the outer edge of Harrisburg. Enrollment in the

first course totaled 41 students coming mostly from the surrounding area, some traveling, however, as far as 30 miles. Of the initial group of 41 students, many are from public libraries; some are from school libraries, the Pennsylvania State Library, and a few are from academic libraries in the area. The first course offered was LS 500, Information Sources and Services. Additional courses are planned for the summer and fall of this year.

This program is offering two courses per semester on weekends in Harrisburg permitting the student to earn a total of 30 semester hours while remaining in the Harrisburg area. A further requirement is that each student must take two courses for a total of 6 semester hours on the Clarion campus. The combination of these 36 credit hours will result in the student receiving a Master of Science in Library Science degree. The program is offered in cooperation with the Dauphin County Library System, currently a branch library serves as headquarters for the program. The conditions are typical, all students must be admitted to the Clarion State College graduate school and to the master's program in Library Science. Clarion's Graduate School of Library Science is accredited by the American Library Association. That is not to say, however, that the Harrisburg program has been accorded that status at this time. In order to assure that costs are recovered and that time is not wasted, each course must have an attendance for enrollment of 20 or more students. The classes are held on six weekends each semester, Friday evenings and Saturday all day, though this is subject to variation depending upon whatever arrangements can be made between students and the instructor. On July 1, 1983, Clarion State College changes its name by act of the legislature to Clarion

University of Pennsylvania.

Library material in support of the program was obtained first from Dauphin County Public Library itself, secondly from the Pennsylvania State Library and of course Clarion State College's Carlson Library on the Clarion campus. Initial arrangements for the procurement of material locally were made by telephone. The Dauphin County Public Librarian graciously agreed to have a branch library serve as headquarters for the program and also to furnish material. The director of the State Library division also agreed to support the program with loans of useful material. Initiation of the first course was scheduled for January, 1983, but due to delays in processing of applications and in recruiting a faculty member, the course opening was delayed until March. Finally one of the faculty from the Clarion home campus agreed to teach the course on an overload basis. As it turned out this had great advantages both for the library and for the students. This professor was familiar with the Carlson Library's holdings and the students benefited by having one of the regular faculty offer the initial course. This faculty member has handled carrying library materials to the public library in his car from the Carlson Library but is not engaged in supervising the distribution of the material or its circulation to students. The branch of the public library does that. In Clarion, in the Carlson Library, the Learning Resources librarian, head of the division, is coordinating the effort of identifying, gathering and/or ordering material which is needed to support the program. In the initial startup of this program, a site visit was not made by any of the librarians, however, a site visit is planned for early spring. I

will visit Harrisburg and the Dauphin County East Shore Area Branch Library as well as the headquarters library, to inspect the site, review arrangements with the branch librarian, and also review arrangements with the director of the Dauphin County Library System and thank that person for the assistance that has been offered. It was not possible prior to this time to make a site visit, and since one of the regular faculty was teaching the course, we thought that would be sufficient for the moment until some free time could be found.

Preparation for support of this program included the production of a flier. This flier describes the available library service from Clarion with the names and telephone numbers of librarians who can be called for assistance. The service includes computer literature searching. A student working on a research paper may compose a search and call a reference librarian or a librarian in the Learning Resources division and obtain assistance in having a computer literature search, i.e. online data base search, made for information relating to that topic.

Here are some details of our plan for supporting this program with library materials. Any materials acquired by Clarion State College libraries will be ordered and processed in Clarion. This will consist of property marking and material will be forwarded to the Dauphin County Branch Library. It will be serviced by the public library and their rules will apply. This means their regular loan policy will apply to the collection, but if reserve service is requested it will be furnished by the library. Clarion will build this collection to an adequate coverage level. This will not be extensive but will include subscriptions for frequently used journals. Expensive items will be carried to Harrisburg

by faculty on a limited basis for more practical use and application directly in a course. We anticipate that by September, 1983, the collection in Harrisburg should be enough to support the first few courses offered. An ongoing effort will be made until sufficient material is available to support the full extent of courses offered in Harrisburg.

Are we pleased with this effort? Yes, but we want improvements. We want to establish a basic plan for such service so that we can repeat the experience as frequently as may be required. Not just for the Graduate School of Library Science but Clarion's other schools as well.

Notice too these arrangements are successful because of the willing cooperation of our public library colleagues. As a group they are dedicated to community service and are always willing to assist with anything that benefits their community. Asking a local public library to assist is a good beginning in planning for good library service to off-campus courses in distant towns and cities.

Our primary concern at Clarion is with the requirements of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Higher Education. That group has issued a paper describing its concern about support for off-campus educational activities. This statement includes the following, "the Commission is primarily concerned with degree granting programs at new levels, credit bearing programs conducted at off campus locations and special programs such as weekend colleges, external degrees, academic credit for experiential learning and the like which may be based on or off the main campus." This paper goes on to state the requirement that any institution planning such activities must notify the commission at least 90 days before commencing. One

of the requirements does cover "provisions for faculty, library, and facilities."

After receiving this information the Commission itself will decide what action to take. The Commission makes it very clear that accreditation is not necessarily extended from a parent campus to an off-campus location without the Commission's express approval.

Other accrediting associations now are requiring library service of equal caliber to that on campus for off-campus continuing education courses. If not, revisions of standards for library service are under consideration to require this objective. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is a primary example of this condition. Present standards do not address the requirement in any great depth but a proposed revision which has been published in the ACRL News for March, 1983, does expand on this requirement.

The Rationale for Off-Campus Continuing Education Library Service

For several years now, I have done much reading on this subject, I have traveled widely in several states investigating library support from academic institutions for their off-campus continuing education credit courses. I became convinced that if off-campus continuing education credit programs were to be viable and credible to the audience for whom they are intended, they must have full library support from the parent campus. There are a good many articles in professional literature about the subject of off-campus support for continuing education programs. Some favor a particular approach or have a

favored solution as for example using a local library as the host library or establishing an institution's own satellite library in a community where programs are offered. Some favor sending packets of material to students and supplementing this by telephone service.

I believe flexibility is the key word here. Each institution's library involved in such service must adapt solutions to fit the local need but they should clearly establish responsibility with their own library, the parent library. Yes, transfer library materials to a host library but don't transfer service responsibility for any depth of service beyond making materials available. Really this is to say, don't impose more than necessary on colleagues in local libraries. Do provide computer literature searching service and telephone reference service. Put in a toll free line if necessary to do this. Do not allow faculty to go out to another location or even to be hired locally in a remote location without contacting them directly and working out all the necessary details for good library service.

I believe that the latter point cannot be over emphasized. Certainly do not permit "straight from the textbook teaching." Yes, I believe that surely you can militate strongly against this. Why? This is an easy explanation, it lowers the quality of the program, makes it vulnerable to accrediting agencies standards and lowers the status or image of librarians in the public eye. Remember a quality education on a campus includes library service. It must do so off campus as well. We have the capability of coming very close to this ideal today. Our communication systems are very good. There is no problem in providing

computer literature searching or online data base searching, if you prefer, via telephone inquiries or even inquiries received by mail. Use the mail and/or messenger service to deliver materials. Some authors who have written on this subject strongly recommend on site visits by reference librarians for the purpose of instructing students in composing requests for online data base searches. This certainly conveys a sense of reality to the students, that is, library service really is available and qualified people are at the parent library to provide it. Our plan for service in Harrisburg requires all of this. We may adopt for other locations but the basic plan will remain in place.

Prior to my move to Clarion, my previous experience was at an institution in Virginia where I was Director of University Libraries. At that institution our continuing education courses were virtually local. Again, within a reasonable driving radius of the city, so it was possible for students to come to the campus when they needed assistance. When courses were offered in Petersburg, Virginia and Fairfax, Virginia, the latter nearly 90 miles away, we were able to place materials in other state owned institution's libraries. If reference service was needed either they or us could provide it. Students' needs for additional assistance and information could be met by either the host library or the parent library and library service was available with a very simple solution.

The state of Virginia has guidelines for this off-campus library service promulgated by the Council of Higher Education, the governing body for higher education in Virginia. In an earlier paper,[1] I expressed the view that there

[1]"As If They Were Here," Library Service for Off-Campus Students. Central Michigan University Library, Occasional Papers 1983.

should be state-wide standards or even regional standards for assuring the quality of off-campus library support. My recommendations as expressed in that paper included the following which should be required of all institutional libraries offering such support for their institution's off-campus programs. These included:

1. A demonstrated ability to support graduate level work with a superior computer assisted literature searching service. Evidence of such support includes copies of agreements with recognized data base vendors. There are several of these. As I stated in the paper "I believe this to be an imperative particularly for advanced professional instruction and certainly for advanced work in any discipline."

2. The ability to supply recorded and visual materials and essential assigned reading in standard print and non-print formats in sufficient copies for use by students. This guideline includes the provision of a syllabus for each course instruction including both assigned and collateral readings, recorded or visual materials as may be required by the subject and or the teaching of advanced material.

3. The institution should provide budgetary and financial data supporting its intent to offer the services described in the first two requirements.

4. Evidence of membership or participation in a recognized library service network such as OCLC Inc., Research Libraries Information Network, National Library of Medicine Regional Network and/or adherence to the national inter-library loan code with demonstrated ability to respond to student requests for information through a quality reference service or inter-library loan service from the institution's own library.

5. For the convenience of its students who are residents of the locale where classes are taught, the offering institution should make arrangements with a local academic or public library for the servicing of library materials, i.e. assigned and collateral readings furnished to the host library for use by such students. A formal contract may or may not be required.

Here as I stated, I am expressing advocacy for state-wide or even regional standards. The call is for quality. For survival's sake we must have standards and this in itself means we will have quality.

Thank you.